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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# *WEEKLY SUMMARY*

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48

26 January 1968  
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## C O N T E N T S

(Information as of noon EST, 25 January 1968)

Far East

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The Communists appear to have scheduled a country-wide military campaign for late January. In Saigon, there may be some easing of tensions between Thieu and Ky. Hanoi has reduced its propaganda attention to Foreign Minister Trinh's statement on talks with the US.	

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## LAOTIAN GOVERNMENT FORCES SUFFER SEVERE SETBACK

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The loss of Nam Bac represents one of the most severe military defeats the government has suffered in five years, but there are still no indications that the Communists intend to press their advantage by a drive into government-held areas.

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## FAR EAST

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In South Vietnam, artillery and probing attacks against the US Marine base at Khe Sanh apparently mark the opening round of an ambitious Communist winter offensive. The main weight of the campaign probably will be directed at South Vietnam's northern provinces, but there are indications of plans for coordinated assaults in other parts of the country. With a major offensive in the offing, Hanoi has reduced its propaganda attention to its late December statement on talks with the US and has bitterly denounced President Johnson's remarks on Vietnam in his State of the Union message.

In Saigon, President Thieu made his second major bid in ten days for a greater voice in allied decisions. In a speech to the National Assembly, Thieu insisted there could be no cessation of bombing until the Communists end their guerrilla attacks, subversion, and terrorism in the South as well as their infiltration from the North.

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## VIETNAM

Communist strategists apparently plan to kick off a major country-wide military campaign sometime around Tet, the lunar new year at the end of January. The main pressure will probably be mounted in the northern provinces.

The opening round apparently occurred in Quang Tri Province on 19 January with a series of probes against allied positions in the Khe Sanh area, followed up later in the week with large-scale mortar, rocket, and artillery bombardments. Heavy fighting also occurred near Gio Linh in the northeastern corner of the province, reflecting enemy efforts to maintain pressure and tie down US forces all along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). On the western end of the DMZ, at least 16,000 North Vietnamese regulars are in the hills surrounding the Marine garrison at Khe Sanh, while up to two enemy divisions threaten allied strongpoints in the eastern half of the province.

tween the Laotian border and Con Thien before the Tet holidays. The defector's remarks suggest that enemy troops are being given an especially heavy dose of propaganda exhortation, which is indicative of the major significance the Communists appear to be placing on the present offensive.

The deserter claimed that the Quang Tri campaign was of such importance that it was being controlled directly by the North Vietnamese Defense Ministry in Hanoi.

There are indications that enemy operations in the northern provinces may be coordinated with attacks in the western highlands and perhaps in northern III Corps. There has been continued maneuvering by subordinates of the B-3 Front, both along the Kontum-Pleiku provincial border area and in the mountains of Kontum adjacent to the Laos-Cambodian border, where at least five North Vietnamese regiments have been identified. Several recently captured documents discuss plans to attack specific targets in Pleiku--including the province capital, possibly in conjunction with actions in the triborder area.

A North Vietnamese [ ]

[ ] who defected at Khe Sanh last weekend, claims that the mission of his unit--the North Vietnamese 325C Division--is to overrun every US base be-

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Although fighting in northern III Corps has slackened recently, elements of three Communist divisions--the Viet Cong 5th and 9th, and the North Vietnamese 7th--are in a position to threaten several key points, including the Loc Ninh - Song Be area.

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Reinforcing the likelihood of wide-ranging enemy offensive operations before or soon after Tet are the tapering off of the northeastern monsoon in the DMZ area and the new moon cycle itself, both natural factors that are known to create conditions favorable to enemy initiatives.

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#### Politics in Saigon

There are tenuous indications that the strains between President Thieu and Vice President Ky may be easing.

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The government is continuing to strengthen its position in the Lower House. The committee chairmen elected on 18 January put probable government supporters in charge of a majority of the committees. This enhances prospects of house cooperation with the executive branch, and results from a continued alliance between deputies in the progovernment Democratic Bloc and those of the northern Catholic-dominated Independence Bloc.

#### Hanoi Rejects Reciprocity

North Vietnam seems unwilling at present to go any further

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in publicly elaborating on its position concerning talks with the US. In contrast to its efforts prior to President Johnson's State of the Union address to underscore the reasonableness of the Communist position, Hanoi now seems bent on preventing any exaggerated interpretations of its intentions. After strongly denouncing the President's restatement of the San Antonio formula, North Vietnam-

ese media generally have concentrated on presenting Hanoi's usual hard-line treatment of the war and have ignored the issue of negotiations. On 22 January, the DRV representative in Paris canceled a scheduled interview with a New York Times official on the grounds that he had said everything he had to say at this time. [redacted]

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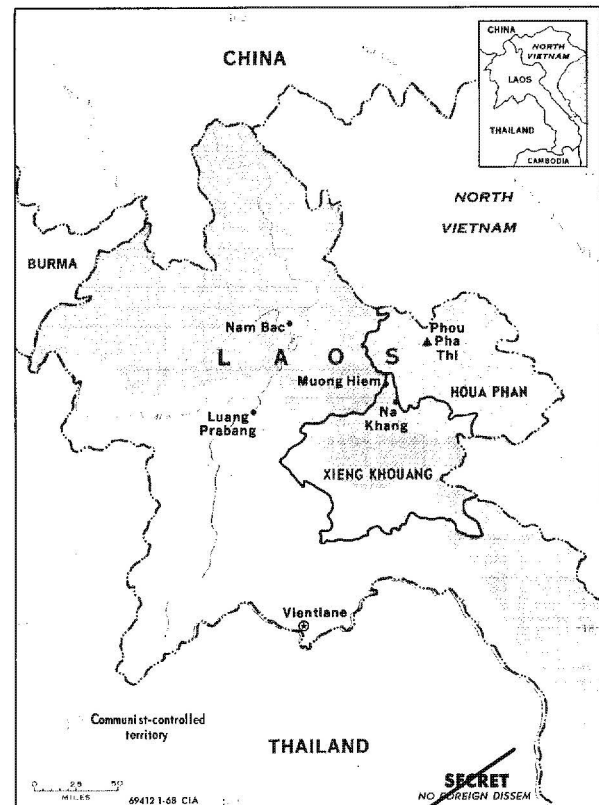
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## LAOTIAN GOVERNMENT FORCES SUFFER SEVERE SETBACK

The loss of Nam Bac on 13 January represents one of the most severe military setbacks the Laotian Government has suffered in five years, but there are still no indications that the Communists intend to press their advantage by a drive into government-held areas.

It will be some time before total government casualties can be determined, but losses will probably be high. A full week after the defensive perimeter collapsed, less than half the original complement of 3,500 is accounted for. The enemy is still harassing units as they attempt to withdraw, and friendly guerrilla units and helicopters are being moved in to help with the evacuation. The government also lost large stocks of heavy weapons, ammunition, food, and equipment.

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Communist propaganda emphasized that the attack against Nam Bac was a response to the government's "nibbling tactics," and called on its forces to remain resolute in "defense of liberated areas." This line is also being pushed by the Pathet Lao representative in Vientiane.

Meanwhile, the Communists are closing in on the strategic government guerrilla base at Phou Pha Thi, which was the target of the unsuccessful North Vietnamese air strike on 12 January. The enemy has taken a number of outlying posts in recent days, possibly in preparation for artillery attacks on the airstrip. The loss of Phou Pha Thi, which is only 15 miles from the North Vietnam border, would seriously disrupt government operations in northern Houa Phan Province, and would impair US air attacks against North Vietnam.

In addition, the Communists captured the government position at Muong Hiem on 23 January, suggesting that an early thrust may be made against Na Khang, the principal base for friendly guerrilla operations in northern Xieng Khouang Province.

In southern Laos, the enemy continues to threaten some major government bases, although no large-scale attacks have been reported in several weeks. The Communists, however, have disrupted US AID development programs in this part of the country. By tying substantial numbers of government troops to static defensive positions, the Communists also have already achieved one of their primary objectives in their current dry-season campaign. [REDACTED]

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